

A DISH OF APPLES

BY EDEN PHILLIOTTS

WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS

BY ARTHUR RACKHAM





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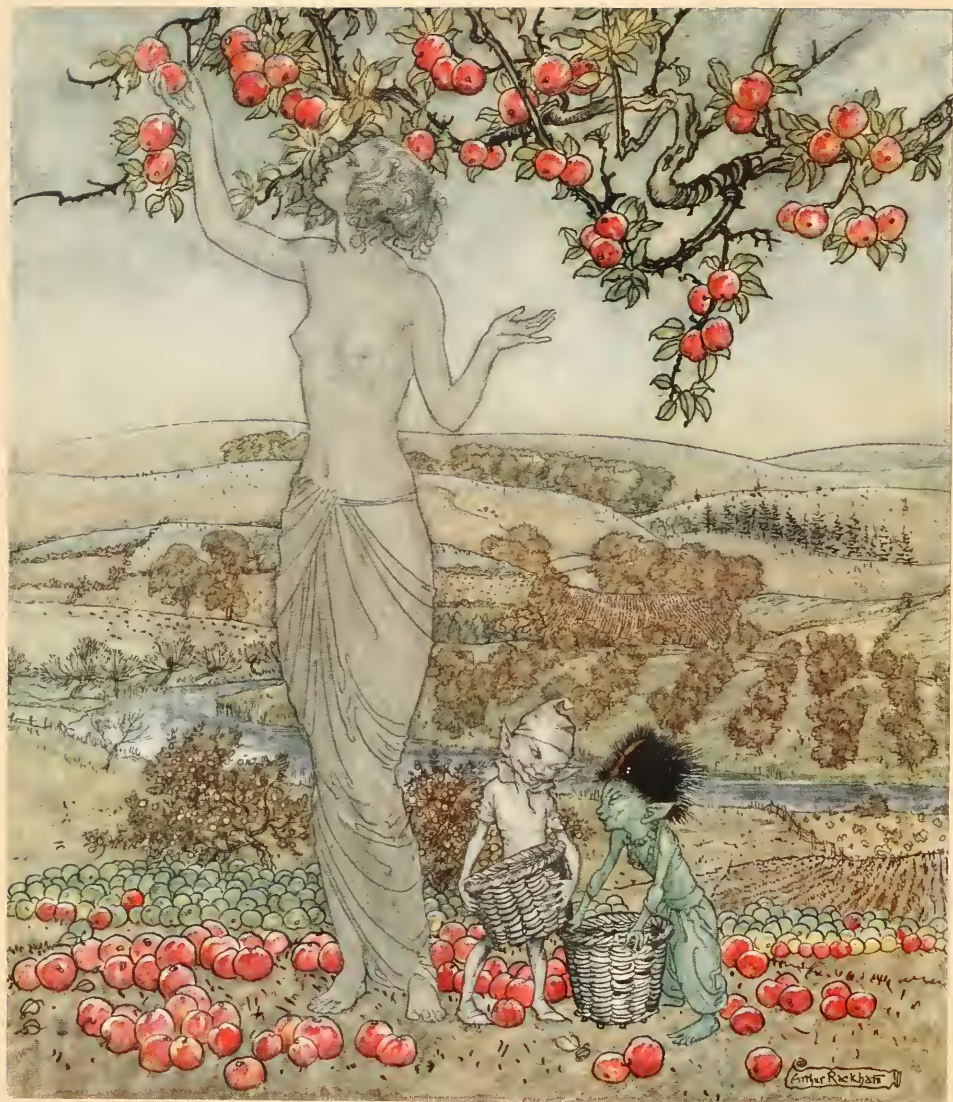




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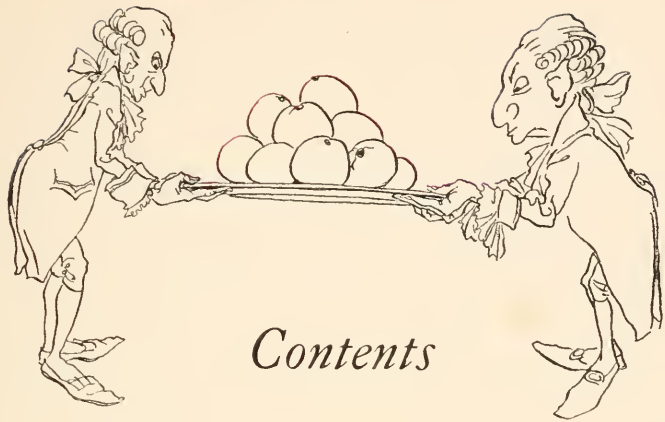


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} The Fruits



Illustrations in Colour

Pomona (p. 75

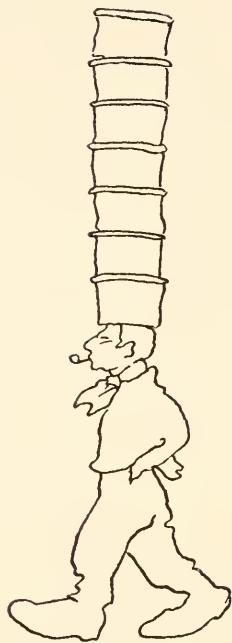
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Not till every leaf has flown
Will he desert his summer throne

facing page 44

Lady's apple thou shalt be

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Illustrations in Black and White

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Arthur Rackham.

The Wassailing



The Wassailing

I

OLD Christmas Eve's the proper night
For wassailing the apple-trees ;
And though the snow came to their knees,
Our fore-fathers done what was right,
Poured out their cider, sang their song
And fired their guns the boughs among,
 With Ned and Fred and Jeremy,
 And Jonah Moss and Billy Blee,
 And gran'fer Budd, up home four score,
 And Sammy Meek, back from the war.

II

The girls their cider pitchers bring,
With liquor steaming on the air
And toast and spices floating there.
Then come a score of boys to sing,
And at the gate, awaiting us,
Jan Bassett with his blunderbus,
 And Lil and Jill and Minnie West,
 Jane Mortimer and Henry Best,
 And Benny Tutt and Saul Halfacre
 With Molly Dawe and Uncle Baker.

III

The trees fling down upon the snow
Their crooked shadows where we walk,
To hear the ancient gaffers talk
Of wassailings long, long ago ;
Then pour their cider at the roots
To help another summer's fruits,
 With Nick and Dick and Amos Thorn,
 Old Westaway and Michael Horn,
 And they two boys of Walter Bleet :
 No angels ever sang so sweet.

IV

Bang ! Bang ! and Bang ! the guns do ring
And flash a light upon the throng,
Who laugh aloud and tramp along
All busy at the wassailing.
But here and there twin shadows go
Where hangs a tod of mistletoe
 Nigh Ann, or Nan, or Johnny Lugg,
 Or dashing Merryweather Chugg—
 A peacock's feather in his hat
 For all the world to wonder at.

V

The moony branches, bright and clear
Are full of funny, goblin eyes
All staring down in great surprise
To see their neighbours keep such cheer.

There's whispering from tree to tree
Above the jolly company
Of Sib and Tib and Toby Trout,
With " crookback " Jim and Sandy Prout,
And many another blade, so gay,
In oak and elm long laid away.

VI

Good Lord ! It don't seem far ago ;
But then I was a little lad
And snuggling close beside my dad,
Busting wi' joy to see the show.
'Tis sixty year and more I doubt
They bygones held their merry rout,
With Belle and Nell and Yeoland's boys,
And " Ship " and " Trip " to help the noise ;
And Samson Worm and Sibby Ash
Stole little Susan Caunter's sash.

VII

But half a century will round
The old folk up ; and many young
Be also out of harm among
Their elders underneath the ground.
And in these strange, new-fangled days,
There's few to mind the ancient ways
Of Nick, or Dick, or Amos Thorn,
Jane Mortimer, or Michael Horn,
Or gran'fer Budd, or Toby Trout,
Or Farmer Westaway, so stout.

VIII

Yet when Old Christmas Eve do bring
Together moon and snow once more,
I see that far away upstore ;
I hear the sleeping people sing,
And mark, so thick as honey bees,
Their ghostes through the apple-trees,
 With Ned and Fred and Jeremy,
 And Jonah Moss and Billy Blee,
 And Merryweather Chugg, so grand ;
 And father holding of my hand.



Cider Makers



Cider Makers

WHEN drifts the apple-breath, to steal again
Through fruit-crowned orchards, like a fragrant wave,
And when on stilly nights
The falling fruit we hear ;

Then creak the rusty hinges, gape the doors
Of cider presses, slumbering and dim ;
And cobwebs tatter down
To shrivel in the light.

Through many a dusty vault the autumn sun
Launches a ruby shaft at eventide,
Determining shadowy shapes
Within the velvet gloom.

The presses heave, like cavern idols set
Above the granite troughs around their knees,
And seem to wake again
And stretch their giant limbs ;

For tide of life is running ; feet of men
Trample the orchard herbage, stamp a stain
That winds away and fades
Among the mossy boles.

Beneath the bough another harvest lies
In mounds and pools of light and scattered stars,
That gleam within the heart
Of every apple glade,

Shining behind the shadows, twinkling out
Where sunlight strokes the grass to emerald,
Or where, in garnered heap,
The crimson apples flame.

Old ministrants of cider mysteries
Blend sweet and sour on immemorial plan,
And wrap the sacrifice
In woven horse-hair grey ;

And when the presses turn and grip and crush,
In rivulets the virgin ciders flow,
While sunbeams twine thereon
A braid of trickling fire.

There is a hum and bustle through the vault ;
Great, hairy arms knot up and heavy hands
Tug at the beams of oak
Upon their shining screws ;

While round each door the feathered people run—
White, spangled, bronze and coral red of comb—
Who from the pomace peck
A feast of nut-brown seeds.

Ripples the cider with a little sound,
Like the least, purring rill, that runs to catch
Within her silver bow
The blue forget-me-nots.

Ripples the cider, when the vat is drawn,
Translucently, as though crushed opal stones
Were melted ; then away
The racking to endure.

The ancient men who labour at the mill,
Have drunk from more than fifty cider brews,
Straining the massy beams
For half a century.

Where rays of light resolve the polished wood,
A fret of carving still their timbers show,
And, graved upon the grain,
Are names of heroes fallen.

For many a vanished, mighty-shouldered man,
Who drove the press at bygone vintages,
The oak shall feel no more,
Yet still his life records ;

And though no stone declares their sleeping-place
Under the darnel, yet the quick may read
How their old knives have set
A last memorial here.

Day upon day the curdled cider spurts,
The timbers grind and grunt, and through the murk.
The towering screws throw down
Their cold and steely shine.

Then, flowing on and racked and racked again,
The cloudy liquors sparkle amber-bright,
Till fore-glow of the dawn
Is not more crystal clear.

The rites are ended ; barrels seem to bulge ;
Wet vats grow dry and weary beams are still,
Their chronicles enriched
With new recorded names.

Once more the doors are fast put home again
And quiet comes, to tempt with solitude
Quick, peaceful, flickering things
That fear the voice of man.

The presses slumber and their fragrance fades ;
The shadowy mouse steals back into his haunt ;
An empty knot-hole throws
The only ray of light,

When, red of eye on low November eves,
The sun peeps through the naked apple-boughs,
To flash a fleeting glance
That's lost in nothingness.

Patient Arachne, hanging on her thread,
One moment twinkles, like a bead of gold ;
Then only fitful sounds
Whisper upon the dark.

Cornish Gillyflower



Cornish Gillyflower

THE happy pair I cannot find,
Whose wedding, in some orchard bower,
Begot this king of apple-kind :
Your royal, Cornish Gillyflower ;
But bless the bee the pollen shed
On that glad day his parents wed.

He does not challenge at a glance ;
Nor flash a laughing, gladsome eye ;
He never seems to beck, or dance,
Like others of the family,
When through our laden orchard aisles
The glory of their harvest smiles.

High-shouldered, in a plain, green coat,
Uplifted on a mossy twig ;
He does not sparkle, smile and gloat ;
He's neither bright, nor gay, nor big.
Colour's a weakness he disdains
And unto no great bulk attains.

He will not promise anything ;
He likes to leave the uncultured cold
Who seek " Tom Putt," or " Pippin King "—
Poor slaves to scarlet and to gold.
As " intellectuals " you may find,
He thanks God for his austere rind.

But we, who know the inner worth,
Shall pluck him with a grateful hand,
First of all apples on the earth,
Best of all apples in the land—
A paragon, a super-type,
Not to be munched till he is ripe.

Then set him on no stuffy board :
He is too subtle, strange and sweet.
Oh, be that Philistine abhorred
Who'd sacrifice him after meat.
Solemn the rite of your repasting :
Eat " Gilly " in the dawn—and fasting!

Ribston Pippin



Ribston Pippin

AUGUST Thalia, lift my trivial rhyme
To the sublime ;
Lend me, for once, your purple ink to dip in :
I sing, or try to sing, the Ribston Pippin.

In russet clad, and o'er his noble head
A halo spread,
He reigns upon a cordon lifted high.
The very wasps salute as they pass by.

The courtier leaves, that bend about his throne,
Their livery own
From him,—his radiant, melting, mellow brown,
And amber rich, and scarlet from his crown.

With reverend wings, the peacock butterfly
Will sometimes try
To shield his forehead from the noontide blaze,
Knowing no such bloom on all her flowery ways.

Ambrosia, nectar, both ; and at his best
A palimpsest ;
For, through the abundance of his native wealth,
Rise magic dreams of eastern fruit by stealth.

Oh more than apple : an elixir too ;
Who would not woo
The incomparable mystery he stores
From orient garths and spicy-scented shores ?

All-heal to every ache and grief and pain,
Scion of strain
They harvested for Ahmed's princely hand
In gardens of old, golden Samarcand.



Barnack Beauty





IMPARTIALLY displayed with these,
The apples of Hesperides
Had taken but a second place,
For flesh, for flavour and for grace.
The very birds sing best to me
Upon a "Barnack Beauty" tree.

This fruit majestic, what time
He cometh to his lordly prime,
Dons ruby satin, rich and bold,
Slashed over cloth of purest gold.
As many a mind of high estate,
His quality develops late.

When sinks the sun at grey November,
Still, like a genial, glowing ember,
Perched firm upon his pyramid,
Though orchard lands in leaves are hid,
With steadfast heart and patient eye,
He marks the pageant pass and die.

Not until every leaf has flown
Will he desert his summer throne,
Then, full of days and plump with sap,
Leap gaily down into your lap ;
For since the apple world began,
He's shown a great goodwill to man.

A " Barnack Beauty," I surmise,
Paris provided for his prize ;
And through the pips you surely trace
A fruit that lost and won the race,
When Atalanta stooped to seize
What Venus gave Hippomenes.



Normandy Pippin



Normandy Pippin

HOW pure the azure arch and dome
Above the orchards of his home ;
How round the clouds with plumage bright,
Golden and rose and silver white,
That sail majestically by
O'er Normandy, o'er Normandy.

And when the foaming blossoms blow
At red bud-break and all is snow,
That buries in its avalanche
The lichened bough and sweeping branch,
Who would not wing and swiftly fly
To Normandy, to Normandy ?

When autumn days are come again
And burn the gentle hill and plain
Beneath their sparkling harvest, then
The girls and boys, the maids and men
Their baskets bring and pluck and ply
Through Normandy, through Normandy.

It is not given all to see
That precious pippin on his tree ;
He finds his mournful way to town
A withered, shrunken wight, and brown,
With figure gone and crest awry
From Normandy, from Normandy.

Faded the roses from his brow,
He's mummified and wrinkled now
Into a squat, ungainly lump.
Oh rusty, melancholy dump,
Can such a goblin testify
Of Normandy, of Normandy ?

Fear not to trust him : he is one
Whom many griefs have not undone,
For fiery torments to his heart
Only an added joy impart.
Seeds of the martyrs sanctify
All Normandy, all Normandy.

But when their auburn blood we drink,
The dish forgotten, still we think
Of sunny orchards where they grew,
Of apple-blooth and shadows blue
Upon the petals, till we sigh
For Normandy, for Normandy.

Crab Apple



Crab Apple

WINTER has filched the forest bare ;
The boughs are naked, lean and grey
But whisper to the winter air,
All croaking, creaking cheerfully,
Of what the Spring
Will bring.

Where breaks the wood upon the hill
The branches of a crab arise
And round about, for all who will,
Her unregarded harvest lies,
Cheerful and bright
To sight.

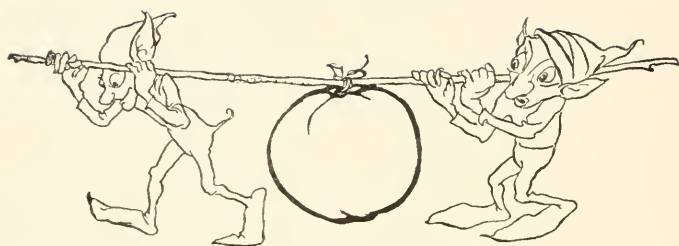
Her jewels flash among the weeds
With not a peck, or bite, or scar
Save where a mouse, in hope of seeds,
Has taken courage one to mar,
But lost the gain
For pain.

Both men and women happen so,
Of pulp acerb and spirit bleak :
Right well their inner wealth they know,
And muse why neighbours never seek
To win the gold
They hold.

Alas, we shirk them, shy and swerve
At greeting chill and voice unkind ;
We dread the pang and lack the nerve
To tackle their unfriendly rind ;
Our days fly past
Too fast.



Warner's King



Warner's King

WARNER, I knew thee not, but praise thy name,
Exalt thy genius and extol thy fame.
To few among the sons of men belong
More fruitful honour than my modest song
Awards to thee ; thy pilgrimage on earth
Doth shine in a memorial of worth
And pillar of renown, a prize, confessed
Of apples one among the dozen best !

With regal dignity, while Summer wheels,
He waxeth, till his glorious girth reveals
His station on the bough, and through the green
His monumental bulk at last is seen.
A globe of polished emerald he's found,
Reluctant to alight until one pound
Of sweet and solid flesh his body weighs—
A joy and pride for early Autumn days.

Anon, behold, through the dim apple-room,
A genial flame irradiate the gloom !
It is the ripening of Warner's Kings
From green to orange gold : one often flings
A roseate ribbon, pure as twilight's breast,
About the sunset yellow of his vest.
They scent the silence ; through each lordly row
Deepens the radiant colour, warms the glow.

About the anxious hours of Christmas Day
None shall be found so debonair as they.
Dark though the sky, or white the wintry earth,
They bring their hoarded sunshine and their worth,
With large goodwill and generosity—
Each juicy monarch a repast for three.
The baser sort consume in pies and stews :
They know not what they do, or what they lose.

When blessed Newton, on a day of ease
Dallied at Woolsthorpe in the apple trees,
Against a goodly bole his back reclined
While solemn thoughts revolved about his mind ;
And when, upon that philosophic tile,
A " Warner's King " descended, with a smile
The sage responding grasped the situation :
Hence our attractive Law of Gravitation.

Cheat-the-Boys



Cheat-the-Boys

OF all the apples that I know,
Or sweet or sharp, or harsh or mellow,
This rubicund and devious fellow
Arrides alike the high and low,
By seeming honesty of show.

Displayed upon a goodly bough,
When August to September turns,
His gold and scarlet splendour burns—
A very master-jewel now
For Dame Pomona's gracious brow.

And did we leave him there, we might
Still wish him well and speak him fair,
As something worthy, rich and rare,
Respecting such a joyous sight
Without a nudge from appetite.

If we but walked the orchard shades
And satisfied our teeth and tongue
With lesser, modest beauties hung,
Russet and lemon, in the glades
Of apple-scented, sweet arcades ;

Then all were well ; but it annoys
The thrifty soul to see such riches
Tumbling ungarnered into ditches :
We pluck their gay, deceitful toys
And join the other cheated boys.

Devonshire Quarrenden



Devonshire Quarrenden

SOME love a “ Russet ” dearly, and some the sweet “ Permain,”
But if you want an “ early,” when August comes again,
Oh, where’s a better beauty within the orchard’s ken,
Than nutty, fragrant, fruity, old “ Devon Quarrenden ” ?

“ St. Everard’s ” a treasure I like to find in reach
And always make some leisure to love the “ Irish Peach ” ;
But these seductive creatures are gone with summer days :
They lack the nobler features that “ Quarrenden ” displays.

This was the very apple, though some may disbelieve,
Flashed through a leafy dapple and took the eye of Eve ;
And if you’ll seek another and hold it to the light,
You’ll see where our first mother bestowed her fateful bite.

An error and far-reaching, as all the best agree ;
But they can do the preaching if I may have the tree ;
For whether safe in Heaven, or bunkered and elsewhere,
My “ Quarrenden of Devon ” shall be established there.



Allington Pippin





ARTAURSCHAMM

Allington Pippin

DELICATE and dainty thing !
For the fairies you were fashioned ;
Than a flavour so impassioned
Pine and grape no richer bring.
Poets falter
At your altar,
Lacking grace your charm to sing.

Never was a blonde so fair ;
Not a wild rose in the morn
Wore a blush so sweet and rare,
Laughing all the maids to scorn.
Such perfection
Of complexion
Well might make a girl despair.

Lady's apple thou shalt be
Food that pretty women eat—
Pouting lips thy destiny,
Sparkling sweets unto the sweet.
Anathema
For the dreamer
Male, who lifts a hand to thee.

Pyban apples, with their scent,
Fed the pygmy folk of old ;
Such ethereal nourishment
Made them all as good as gold ;
And would that we,
Inspired by thee,
Thus attained to our content.

If on fragrance we might thrive ;
If the scent of quince and pear,
Breath of honey from the hive,
Odours in the orchard air
Filled our menu,
What a gay, new,
Gentle, gracious life we'd live !



Song to Pomona



Song to Pomona

A SILVER dew lies on the Autumn grasses,
Autumnal sunshine habits every tree ;
From each bejewelled bough there slowly passes
Immeasured scent and sweetness up to thee,
Pomorum Patrona ! Pomorum Patrona !
O hear, as thou wert wont to hear of old,
Thou guardian goddess of the red and gold.

Banners, above thine orchard temples flying,
Flame a new splendour from each glowing glade,
And radiant hills of clustered light are lying
Beneath the lichened pillars in the shade,
Pomorum Patrona ! Pomorum Patrona !
O give, as thou wert wont to give of old,
Thou guardian goddess of the red and gold.

With ample stores abundantly she blesses
Each nestling hamlet of the hills and plains,
Shaking within their thirsty cider-presses
The glory garnered from her woodland fanes.
Pomorum Patrona ! Pomorum Patrona !
We praise thy name with voices young and old,
Thou guardian goddess of the red and gold.



Arthur Rackham.

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